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REPORT OF THE INFORMAL CONTACT GROUP ON GENDER

Note by the Secretariat

1. At its thirty-ninth session, held at United Nations Headquarters from 15 March to 7 April 1995, the Commission on the Status of Women, acting as preparatory body for the Fourth World Conference on Women, decided to establish an informal contact group to seek agreement on the commonly understood meaning of the term "gender" in the context of the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (decision 39/3). The contact group was to be chaired by the Rapporteur of the Commission, Ms. Selma Ashipala (Namibia), and to report to the Conference at its pre-session consultations.

2. The informal contact group met twice at United Nations Headquarters, on 16 and 31 May 1995. The group decided that the President of the Conference should read a statement at the Conference indicating the commonly understood meaning of the term "gender". The text of the statement, as agreed by the informal contact group, is contained in the annex below.

ANNEX

Statement by the President of the Conference on the commonly understood meaning of the term "gender"

1. During the 19th meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, acting as preparatory body for the Fourth World Conference on Women, an issue arose concerning the meaning of the word "gender" in the context of the Platform for Action of the Conference. In order to examine the matter, the Commission decided to form a contact group in New York, with the Commission's Rapporteur, Ms. Selma Ashipala (Namibia), as Chairperson. The Commission mandated the informal contact group to seek agreement on the commonly understood meaning of "gender" in the context of the Platform for Action and to report directly to the Conference in Beijing.

2. Having considered the issue thoroughly, the contact group noted that: (1) the word "gender" had been commonly used and understood in its ordinary, generally accepted usage in numerous other United Nations forums and conferences; (2) there was no indication that any new meaning or connotation of the term, different from accepted prior usage, was intended in the Platform for Action.

3. Accordingly, the contact group reaffirmed that the word "gender" as used in the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women was intended to be interpreted and understood as it was in ordinary, generally accepted usage. The contact group also agreed that the present report should be read by the President of the Conference as a President's statement and that the statement should be part of the final report of the Conference.